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ABSTRACT

The Professional Development Laboratory (P.D.L.) is a model for staff development in which experienced teachers serve as peer coaches for other teachers who want to refine their skills, learn and practice new skills, and share classroom techniques with one another, in selected New York City school districts. Visiting teachers spend 3 to 4 week cycles in the classrooms of resident teachers while their classes are covered by adjunct teachers. To evaluate the program, a survey of 45 teachers and 9 principals was conducted, and interviews were conducted with 2 teachers. P.D.L. resident teachers reported broadening their knowledge base, gaining skills as a coach/staff developer, and becoming more flexible and open to sharing and learning tools of the trade. Eighty percent of resident teachers expressed more satisfaction with their jobs as teachers since joining P.D.L. As a result of observing the resident teachers' classes, many of the visiting teachers made changes in classroom environment, materials, and teaching methods upon returning to their own classrooms. School principals were very positive and supportive of the P.D.L. Three narratives are presented to depict the program's flexibility in serving teachers with different needs. Recommendations for program improvement are offered. (JDD)

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Professional Development
Laboratory (P.D.L.)

1993-94

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Professional Development Laboratory (P.D.L.), founded in 1989, is an innovative model for staff development in which experienced teachers serve as peer coaches for other teachers, new and experienced, who want to refine their skills, learn and practice new skills, and share classroom techniques with one another. The program is presently implemented in Community School Districts 2, 5, and 75 (Special Education). To date, approximately 300 teachers have participated in the program, and over 5,000 students have been affected in some way by their participation.

The program staff included a coordinator, who oversees the project citywide; site facilitators, resident teachers, visiting teachers, and adjunct teachers.

The Office of Education Research (O.E.R.) focused on the professional development of P.D.L. participants and the impressions of P.D.L. school principals during the 1993-94 evaluation. O.E.R. mailed a total of 87 surveys to resident, visiting, and adjunct teachers who participated in the 1993-94 program asking them about their experiences in P.D.L. A total of 17 surveys were also mailed to P.D.L. school principals. The return rates of 55 percent for teachers and 53 percent for principals are considered good for a single administration of a mailed survey.

In addition to the mailed surveys, O.E.R. also conducted pre- and post lab interviews with one visiting teacher from each district to gain individual accounts of the effects of the program.

P.D.L. resident teachers reported broadening their knowledge base, gaining skills as a coach/staff developer, and becoming more flexible and open to sharing and learning new tools of the trade. Eighty percent of the resident teachers expressed more satisfaction with their jobs as teachers since joining P.D.L.

Resident teachers who participated in the yearlong graduate course offered to them by P.D.L. in collaboration with New York University (N.Y.U.), reported that the course helped them to expand their knowledge of evaluation techniques and to improve their ability to communicate and disseminate information to others.

Visiting teachers spent three to four week lab cycles in the classrooms of resident teachers while their classes were covered by adjunct teachers. As a result, many of the visiting teachers made several changes upon returning to their own classrooms which included rearranging classroom furniture to enhance group learning, developing their own teaching materials, and using centers and cooperative learning techniques.

Three-fourths of the adjunct teachers described their P.D.L. experiences as "terrific" because of the variation in their work assignments. (Adjuncts often work in several schools, with different teachers, in different classes.) Three-fourths of the adjuncts also stated that they would apply for the program again, and 50 percent of the teachers were offered full-time classroom teaching positions.

School principals were very positive and supportive in their remarks about P.D.L. The principals saw P.D.L. as a very effective teacher development model and they want their schools to continue in the program.

The three narratives presented in the report depict the program's flexibility in serving teachers with different needs. However, one narrative in particular, also illustrated an important feature of P.D.L. Specifically, the act of reaching out to teachers in need and offering them constructive assistance, can often mean the difference between retaining or losing potentially good and committed teachers.

Based on the findings of this evaluation, O.E.R.'s recommendations are:

- Continue to expand the program to other districts so more teachers can have the opportunity to participate.
- Encourage more resident teachers to enroll in the course offered to them by P.D.L. and N.Y.U.
- Provide visiting teachers with follow-up on an as-needed basis. Some teachers may require more visits than others.
- Find some means of bringing participants together on a regular basis, either annually or in small groups throughout the year, to support group cohesiveness and networking, as well as provide a forum for evaluative feedback.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared by the Office of Education Research High School Evaluation Unit (O.E.R./H.S.E.U.) of the Board of Education of the City of New York under the direction of Dr. Lori Mei, Evaluation Manager. Dr. Katherine Durham, Evaluation Associate, coordinated the evaluation, developed instruments, analyzed data, and wrote the report. Sincere thanks go to Mattie Bialer, Evaluation Consultant, for conducting the on-site interviews and writing the initial draft for that chapter of the report.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Professional Development Laboratory (P.D.L.), now in its fourth year of operation, is a collaborative effort of several public and private organizations whose representatives serve as P.D.L.'s policy board. P.D.L. provides a flexible innovative model for staff development and creates a collegial environment in which experienced teachers serve as peer coaches for other teachers, new and experienced, who want to refine their skills, learn and practice new skills, and share classroom strategies.*

To date, approximately 300 teachers have participated in P.D.L. and over 5,000 students have been affected in some way by their participation.

PROGRAM STAFF

The project coordinator oversees all New York P.D.L. projects. Other program staff are located at the various sites; a summary of their duties is listed below:

- Site Facilitators: Administer the day-to-day operation of the program for the district.
- Visiting Teachers: New or experienced teachers who would like to enrich their professional growth.
- Resident Teachers: Experienced teachers who demonstrate teaching and classroom strategies and methods to visiting teachers, and also coach them throughout the lab cycle.
- Adjunct Teachers: Full-time teachers who replace the visiting teachers during the lab cycle to ensure continuity of instruction.

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*See the 1992-93 P.D.L. evaluation report issued by the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA), currently named the Office of Educational Research (O.E.R.)

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

There were approximately five lab cycles during the school year in which visiting teachers spent three or four weeks in the classrooms of resident teachers while full-time adjunct teachers covered their classes. (Lab cycles can vary in number and length by district.) There were about four or five visiting teachers per cycle. Visiting teachers used the lab cycles to update and learn new strategies, and to observe, share, and practice techniques with resident teachers. Resident teachers made a pre-lab visit to the visiting teacher's classroom for observation and a second visit, after the lab stay, for follow-up.

P.D.L. was implemented in District 75 Special Education Programs for the first time during the 1993-94 school year in addition to Community School Districts (C.S.D.s) 2 and 5. District 75 modified it's P.D.L. program somewhat to include paraprofessionals as well as teachers among its participants. Sites in C.S.D.s 2 and 5 expanded their programs in the 1993-94 year to include grades 3-6 and all elementary grades respectively.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The Office of Educational Research focused on the professional development of P.D.L. participants and the impressions of P.D.L. school principals during the 1993-94 evaluation. A total of 87 surveys were mailed to 36 resident, 33 visiting, and 18 adjunct teachers who participated in the 1993-94 program asking them about their experiences in P.D.L. (The

paraprofessionals are included in the respective teacher totals.) O.E.R. also mailed surveys to 17 P.D.L. school principals. Forty-five teachers and 9 principals responded to the survey, for return rates of 55 percent and 53 percent respectively. Return rates of this magnitude are considered good for a single administration of a mailed survey.

O.E.R. also conducted pre- and post lab interviews with one visiting teacher from each district to gain individual accounts of the effects of the program. Due to the illness of one of the teachers, the post lab interview was canceled. Therefore the data include pre- and post lab interviews for two teachers and a pre-lab only interview for one.

SCOPE OF THE REPORT

Chapter I of this report includes program staff, program description, and evaluation methodology; Chapter II presents background data of the participants, and discusses the professional development of resident, visiting, and adjunct teachers; Chapter III presents impressions of P.D.L. school principals; Chapter IV provides the individual experiences of three visiting teachers; and Chapter V includes conclusions and recommendations.

ED 379 248

OER Report

Professional Development
Laboratory (P.D.L.)

1993-94

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II. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND DATA

Table 1 presents some background information about the P.D.L. participants who responded to the survey. The table shows that the majority of the participants were female, had a master's degree, at least six or more years of teaching experience, and common branches or special education certification.

RESIDENT TEACHERS

Nearly 60 percent of the resident teachers who responded to the survey were in their first year and 68 percent had completed one to five lab cycles. (Resident teachers usually alternate lab cycles.) Also, 14 percent of the resident teachers had previously participated in P.D.L. as a visiting teacher, although this was not a requirement for becoming a resident teacher.

Roles of Residents

Resident teachers defined their role as a mentor teacher, peer coach, facilitator, peer support, team member, etc., all of which reflect the sense of collegiality that is fostered by the program. However, there were two responses in particular, that seemed to summarize all of their definitions and symbolize the intent of the program. One teacher wrote, "my role [as resident teacher] is as a collaborator, staff developer, and an understanding colleague." Another teacher replied, ".... an experienced helping hand in a non-threatening atmosphere."

Impact of P.D.L.

There was total agreement (100 percent) among the respondents that P.D.L. has had a positive effect on their

Table 1

Background Data on P.D.L. Participants
1993-94

Background Data	Percent of Teachers		
	Resident (N=25)	Visiting (N=15)	Adjunct (N=8)
Gender:			
Male	18	40	25
Female	82	60	75
Highest Degree:			
Bachelor's	8	27	13
Master's	80	73	62
Ph.D./Other	12	0	25
Teaching Experience:			
None	0	0	38
1-5 Years	20	33	25
6-10 Years	20	40	25
Over 10 years	60	27	12
Certification/License:[a]			
Common Branches	23	60	
Special Education	36	13	
Early Childhood	5	33	
Administration/ Supervision	9	0	
Other	41	40	

[a]Item did not appear on adjunct teacher questionnaire.

[a]Percents do not total 100 because some teachers were certified in more than one area.

- The overwhelming majority of participants were female.
- The highest degree earned by the majority of the participants was a master's degree.
- More than half of the resident teachers had over 10 years of teaching experience.

professional growth. Many resident teachers stated that they had broadened their knowledge base through the P.D.L. workshops, conferences, and institutes, and through networking with teachers from other schools. Other resident teachers reported gaining new skills as a coach/staff developer, extending their leadership skills beyond the classroom, and at least one has been inspired to finish her doctorate.

Eighty percent of the resident teachers expressed that they were more satisfied with their job as a teacher since joining P.D.L., 16 percent were about as satisfied as before, and four percent were less satisfied. When the residents were asked how P.D.L. had changed them as classroom teachers, nearly three-fourths (72 percent) responded that P.D.L. had revitalized their teaching by making them more aware of their own classroom techniques, skills, and routines. They were now more flexible and open to sharing and learning from colleagues and less "detached" and "narrowminded." Opening their classrooms to others "forced" them to analyze how and why things happen during a lesson and to more readily seek a solution. Another 16 percent had become more organized and focused in performing daily tasks as well as more efficient at planning for instruction. One teacher even discovered that "peer instruction does not always have to be negative." Two teachers indicated that no particular change had occurred in them or in how they conducted their classrooms as a result of their participation.

Impressions of Visiting Teachers

On the topic of major strengths and weaknesses of the visiting teachers they coached, resident teachers stated that

they were impressed with the visiting teachers. They described having a good command of their subject matter and an eagerness to improve by learning new and creative ways of presenting material in the classroom to motivate students as their major strengths. The primary weakness cited was a need to develop strategies for classroom management and discipline. Secondarily, resident teachers also found some visiting teachers to be very nervous and to lack confidence. Learning to relax in the classroom was their recommendation for improving this problem.

Graduate-Level Course

P.D.L., in collaboration with New York University (N.Y.U.), offered a graduate-level course to P.D.L. resident teachers which began in the summer of 1993. The yearlong course was presented in three modules which focused on the teacher as collaborator, facilitator, and researcher. Survey data showed that 64 percent of the respondents were enrolled in the course and 41 percent were taking the course for graduate credit. The teachers reported that the course had helped them improve their coaching skills by providing a broad theoretical background, expanding their knowledge of evaluation techniques, and by enhancing their ability to interact and disseminate information to others.

Suggestions for Program Improvement

A request for suggestions from resident teachers for improving P.D.L. produced these responses: 1) intervisitation among residents teachers across grades, 2) more adjunct teachers to provide consistency of coverage, and 3) monthly or quarterly meetings with all the P.D.L. resident teachers to promote continued cohesiveness.

VISITING TEACHERS

The most frequent responses visiting teachers gave for applying to P.D.L. were first, to improve classroom management skills, and second, to develop new teaching strategies. Although these were the primary reasons given for applying to P.D.L., they actually received much more from the experience as is evident in the discussion to follow.

Teaching Strategies

Visiting teachers were presented with a list of several teaching strategies used in the classroom and asked to indicate if they began using the strategies before or after P.D.L. Table 2 shows that visiting teachers reported using many of these strategies in their classrooms prior to P.D.L.; some, such as hands-on activities (73 percent), writing process (67 percent), and small group lessons (55 percent), more than others. Higher percentages of teachers implemented the thematic approach (55 percent and cooperative learning strategies (45 percent) after their P.D.L. lab. One teacher said, "though I was doing all of the above [refers to list of strategies], it was only after P.D.L. did I feel I was implementing these areas effectively."

Classroom Changes

Visiting teachers reported making a variety of changes in their classrooms after the P.D.L. lab, often doing so immediately upon return to their own classrooms. These changes included, among others, developing their own teaching materials (such as rhyme books and poetry notebooks prepared with the class), rearranging the classroom furniture to enhance group

Table 2

Percent of Visiting Teachers Who Implemented Certain Teaching Strategies Before or After P.D.L., 1993-94

Teaching Strategies	Percent of Teachers	
	Before P.D.L. N=11[a]	After P.D.L. N=11[a]
Cooperative Learning	37	45
Small Group Lessons	55	—
Whole Language	45	27
Hands-on Activities	73	18
Thematic Approach	37	55
Curriculum Guides	45	18
Writing Process	67	18
Interdisciplinary Approach to Learning	37	37
Team Teaching	18	18

[a]Four teachers checked the same strategies for both pre- and post lab implementation, therefore they were eliminated.

- Nearly three-fourths of the teachers implemented hands-on activities in their classroom before P.D.L.
- Higher percentages of teachers implemented the thematic approach and cooperative learning techniques after P.D.L.

learning, integrating subject matter (such as integrating themes with literature), using centers and cooperative learning techniques, and i. lementing reading/writing workshops. Other examples involve changes made in the reading area by putting tabs on books and arranging them by category, and in the math area by using tabs for classifying and sorting materials. Also, doing more writing on the blackboard and providing more hands-on classroom activities.

Attitudes Toward Students

P.D.L. had an impact on the way in which visiting teachers viewed their students in the classroom. One teacher learned to observe her students more closely and to tap into their strategies for learning. Another teacher, who teaches severely and profoundly disabled young children, realized that she must give them more independence in their work. Several teachers reported that they now view their students as individuals rather than as a class or unit, and therefore have gained a better understanding of their needs.

Professional Growth

P.D.L. contributed to the professional growth of visiting teachers by expanding their awareness of new materials and ways of using them with their students. Teachers reported that P.D.L. gave them the courage to reach out and ask for help as well as to give help, and challenged them to acknowledge that change can be a healthy experience. Visiting teachers recognized that the more they learn, the more their students grow. Many visiting teachers began to relate to school as a community of learners.

Changes in Classroom Teaching

The responses to some survey items were quite evenly divided. This was especially the case when visiting teachers were asked how P.D.L. had changed them as classroom teachers. One third of the respondents said that, after P.D.L., they felt more confident, relaxed, and calm in the classroom, and as a result the students were calmer as well. By setting a different tone for the classroom, the visiting teachers discovered they were able to get more done without raising their voices. One teacher even noted that her principal had also made that observation about her classroom. Another third of the teachers indicated they had learned more about lesson planning, particularly how to be more creative and thorough in preparing a lesson. Still another third of the teachers pointed out that by visiting other schools and observing other teachers in the classroom, they had become motivated to be better teachers and strive toward providing a more enriched classroom experience for their students.

Self-Ratings on Performance of Classroom Tasks

Teachers rated themselves on their performance of certain classroom tasks before and after P.D.L. Table 3 reveals that, prior to P.D.L., vast majority of teachers rated their skills as "very good" or "good" for relating to parents (93 percent), preparing lesson plans (87 percent), and working with other teachers (87 percent). Between one-third and one-half of the teachers indicated that they needed to improve classroom management skills (47 percent), and classroom organization skills

Table 3

Results of Self-Rating By Visiting Teachers on Performance of Certain Classroom Tasks Before and After P.D.L. in Percents, 1993-94

Classroom Tasks	% Very Good/Good		% Needing Improvement	
	Before P.D.L. N=15	After P.D.L.	Before P.D.L. N=15	After P.D.L.
Preparing Lesson Plans	87	93	13	7
Handling Learning Problems	80	80	20	20
Classroom Organization	67	93	33	7
Relating to Parents	93	93	7	7
Developing Own Materials	80	100	20	0
Homework Strategies	80	87	20	13
Classroom Management	53	80	47	20
Working with Other Teachers	87	87	13	13
Teaching Different Levels of Students in the Same Class	80	87	80	13

- The vast majority of teachers rated themselves as very good or good in relating to parents, preparing lesson plans, and working with other teachers, before P.D.L.
- Nearly one-half of the teachers needed improvement in classroom management and one-third needed improvement with classroom organization, before P.D.L.
- All (100 percent) of the teachers rated themselves as very good or good in developing their own materials, after P.D.L.
- Significantly fewer teachers needed improvement in classroom management and classroom organization, after P.D.L.

(33 percent). The results of the self-rating by visiting teachers' on the same tasks after P.D.L. are also presented in Table 3. Six of the nine tasks listed showed an increase in the number of teachers who rated themselves as very good or good, with all of the teachers reporting that they mastered the skill of developing their own classroom materials. Significantly fewer teachers reported that they needed improvement in their classroom management and classroom organization skills. However, about one-fifth (20 percent) of the teachers continued to indicate a need for improvement after the lab. These teachers might be candidates for additional follow-up visits.

Suggestions for Program Improvement

Two notable suggestions for improvement of P.D.L. made by visiting teachers are: 1) to provide opportunities for visiting teachers to observe in more than one classroom, and 2) that more observations be made of visiting teachers performing demonstration lessons in order to give constructive criticisms.

Program Impact

On the whole, the things that stood out most in visiting teachers' minds about P.D.L. were the friendliness, generosity, and professional nature of the staff, in addition to the manner in which resident teachers made them feel comfortable and welcome in their classrooms. This is evidenced by the fact that two-thirds of the teachers reported that the match with their resident teacher was a good-fit. Comments made by an experienced teacher participant, reveal a great deal about the outreach of

this program to visiting teachers: "This is a unique and extremely positive experience for me. I am an experienced teacher who has spent most of my teaching career, over 10 years, in a totally isolated classroom; I can appreciate the benefit of this P.D.L. experience."

ADJUNCT TEACHERS

Background

Adjunct teachers heard about P.D.L. through a variety of sources which included the "New York Times", friends, teachers, and site facilitators.

Sixty-three percent of the adjunct teachers who responded had prior teaching experience in public school, and some had both public and private school experience. Previous occupations noted by the teachers included a receptionist, health psychologist, department store operations manager, administrative manager, substitute paraprofessional, and business person.

Preparation

Adjunct teachers prepared for their role by attending workshops offered by the site facilitator and other school and district staff. Other programs operating in the schools such as the Quality Improvement Program Plan for Special Educators (QUIPP) which sponsored storytelling classes, and the Mentor Teacher Internship Program which sponsored workshops on lesson plans, discipline, interdisciplinary approaches, etc., also provided training opportunities for adjunct teachers. In addition, adjuncts visited and observed in the classrooms of several resident teachers.

During each new assignment, the adjunct teacher spent time in the classroom with the visiting teacher prior to his/her lab stay, and again after the lab for transition. Eighty-eight percent of the adjuncts reported spending one week in the classroom working with the visiting teacher and the students prior to the lab, and 63 percent spent one to three days in the classroom after the lab for transition. Seventy-five percent of the adjuncts indicated that after becoming oriented to the routine of the class, they were given autonomy in developing the lesson for the replacement time they would be in the classroom.

Experience in the Program

Six of the eight adjunct teachers who responded to the survey, described their experience as terrific or excellent because of the opportunity to work with a variety of classes and teachers in different school settings. (For this reason, flexibility was a desirable attribute for adjunct teacher candidates.) Two of the respondents, however, were less than enthusiastic about their experience as an adjunct. One adjunct felt it was "a very hard position because of the many variables... one has to work with new teachers, students, and principals." The other adjunct stated, "it was both enlightening and frustrating. A chance to meet new people, but I was unable to change situations and methods with which I did not agree." The program stresses that adjunct teachers should maintain the classroom organization and structure set by the visiting teacher whom they are temporarily replacing.

As one might expect, six adjuncts indicated they would apply to the program again. Four adjuncts reported that they had been offered full-time positions by a school in which they had worked.

Suggestions for Program Improvement

Some suggestions made by adjunct teachers for improving the P.D.L. include: 1) publication of a newsletter, 2) more preparatory time after spending time in the visiting teacher's classroom and before he/she leaves for the lab, and 3) arranging the resource centers to create an example of a model classroom, such as by setting up activity centers.

III. IMPRESSIONS OF P.D.L. SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

All principals who responded to the survey had very high praise for P.D.L., and each one expressed it in a different way. A few of their quoted comments are: "P.D.L. offers change on a one-to-one basis and does it on a classroom level. P.D.L. offers schools models of excellence, collaboration, and teacher leadership...all to improve instruction. P.D.L. energizes and motivates staff. Enthusiasm generated by P.D.L. strengthens the entire school. There has been a professional partnership established between schools...this partnership will result in positive student outcomes."

More than half (56 percent) of the principals who responded were in their first year of implementation. The average number of years that the program had been implemented among of the principals' schools was 1.8 years. Eighty-eight percent of the principals had, on an average, one resident teacher and three visiting teachers participate in the program.

Visiting Teachers

All principals reported that their visiting teachers were now more open to new ideas, willing to cooperate and share with others, and willing to try new methodologies since participating in P.D.L. They reported that their teachers returned from their lab stay rejuvenated, focused, and often ready to put newly learned skills into action immediately. The principals found this to be true for experienced as well as new teachers in the program. Principals also noted that during their routine

classroom observations, the visiting teachers demonstrated sharpened skills, an enhanced level of instruction, and placed more emphasis on assessment. One principal commented that many of the past visiting teacher participants from his school were "tenured teachers who needed the opportunity to rethink their styles and manner of teaching," and hence have shown improvement in classroom management and in their willingness to cooperate with others. Another principal said that he saw more self-confidence displayed by his visiting teachers as evidenced by the positive responses they made upon receiving suggestions from assistant principals.

Resident Teachers

When asked about significant professional changes noticed in their resident teachers, more than three-fourths (77 percent) of the principals indicated teachers' willingness to take on more leadership responsibilities, an openness to try new ideas or projects when they were more hesitant before P.D.L. and improved effectiveness in their own classes.

Adjunct Teachers

Some P.D.L. schools had as many as nine adjuncts and others as few as one. The majority of the principals (88 percent) used terms such as competent, flexible, motivated, excellent, cooperative, and professional to characterize the adjuncts in their schools. The principals also added that the adjuncts adapted quite well to staff, students, parents, and to the school community as a whole. Two principals indicated that they had

hired adjuncts for full-time classroom teacher positions and both principals were very satisfied with the adjuncts' performances to date. Only one principal indicated that he had an adjunct who was unprepared, which caused a chaotic situation in the school.

Overall Perceptions

The overall perception of P.D.L in the schools is positive. Principals tend to view P.D.L. as a very effective staff development model and they want their schools to continue participating. However, some teachers have been reluctant to apply for participation in the program because they would prefer a program that operated on a two or three day a week schedule.

IV. INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES OF THREE P.D.L. VISITING TEACHERS

Each P.D.L. story presented in this chapter represents a visiting teacher from one of the three districts involved in the program. Each story is different and presents an individual teacher's P.D.L. experiences as expressed in pre- and post lab interviews. They are presented here to depict the program's flexibility in serving teachers with different needs.

NARRATIVE A

Mr. J was new to New York City public schools and had been teaching seventh and eighth grade Spanish for only 3 1/2 months. His previous teaching experience had been on the college level in the Dominican Republic. To further complicate the situation, the students he was assigned had been through several teacher changes before he arrived at the school.

He described his students as being academically on grade level and participating satisfactorily in class, but lacking discipline, respect, and manners. He found them to be more distracted on Fridays, anticipating the coming weekend, than on other days. Mr. J commented, "they are very, very smart. They are not aware of how much they know. They started testing me from the beginning, long before I tested them, so they know a lot about psychology."

The interviewer asked Mr. J to rate his performance as very good, good, or needing improvement on the following classroom tasks--preparing lesson plans, handling learning problems, classroom organization, relating to parents, developing class

materials, homework strategies, classroom management, working with other teachers, and teaching different levels of students in the same class. Mr. J rated himself as "very good" or "good" on all items except working "with other teachers" (probably because he hadn't had a chance to do much of that yet). He did not rate himself as needing improvement in any of the areas listed. However, Mr. J was quite candid in discussing the extreme emotional stress that he felt as a new teacher. In sharp contrast to his strong self-rating, Mr. J said he was having problems disciplining his students and felt overwhelmed by the difference between his expectations of student behavior, which were based on what he knew in the Dominican Republic, and the lack of respect he received from his students. Mr. J reported that he began experiencing physiological effects of the tension he felt. His blood pressure was elevated and he was thinking of leaving the school system.

Mr. J decided to apply to P.D.L. after his school's P.D.L. coordinator suggested that he do so. "This is a new city, environment, new people, different races, stated Mr. J. I need to learn to socialize with them; to learn their customs." His goals for P.D.L. included strengthening classroom management skills, improving lesson plan organization, learning how to handle the most common behavior problems, and expanding his use of learning materials and resources. Mr. J commented, "I need to expand...to find out what other teachers do, and how they do it."

At the time of the interview, Mr. J's resident teacher had not made a pre-lab visit to his classroom, but a visit had been

scheduled. "I want her to tell me what I need. Sometimes you can't see these things yourself, responded Mr. J."

An adjunct teacher spent one week with Mr. J prior to his leaving for the P.D.L. lab. He familiarized her with his methods and materials, and made her aware of potential student behavior problems and how they could be handled. The class was looking forward to her visit.

Since Mr. J and his resident teacher taught in the same school, the P.D.L. coordinator was able to structure his lab somewhat different than the usual P.D.L. lab arrangement. For four weeks Mr. J spent two periods a day visiting and observing his resident teacher in her seventh and eighth grade French classes, and she spent two periods a day visiting him in his Spanish classes. (Although the languages are different, the methods for teaching them can be similar.) In addition, the two teachers met four times, spoke informally often, and had a post-lab visit. They included parent-teacher-student communications and relationships as additional skills on which Mr. J would focus.

Mr. J was very pleased with the structuring of his P.D.L. experience. Combining two periods of observation with two periods of teaching enabled him to put into practice what he learned immediately, and to get instant feedback from his resident teacher. It also allowed him to keep in close contact with his students, as well as with the adjunct teacher.

Mr. J also received some training in wordprocessing and computer graphics in the P.D.L. resource room. He now prepares his lessons on the computer to reduce the amount of copying the

students need to do from the board. He also uses his new skills for making signs and posters.

According to Mr. J, his P.D.L. experience helped him very much in preparing lesson plans, handling behavior problems, classroom organization, relating to parents, and classroom management; and only somewhat in handling learning problems, homework strategies, and developing his own materials. (During the pre-lab interview, Mr. J rated his skills as very good or good in those areas.)

As a result of P.D.L., Mr. J made some organizational and instructional changes in his classroom which, he feels, strongly impacted on his students' learning. Prior to P.D.L., Mr. J arranged his classroom in the traditional manner with the students facing the teacher who remained in the front of the room. He also placed more emphasis on writing than on speaking Spanish. Now, his students sit in groups and Mr. J circulates among them. With this arrangement, the students are able to practice speaking to each other within their groups. They are participating more, and are not bored. Mr. J reported that, "....the behavior problems are not problems any more. Now we are having a good time. I feel better and their grades have improved."

Mr. J. now contacts every parent weekly, either by mail or phone, to communicate both favorable and unfavorable information about the children. "I put the parent in the position of helping me and the child."

Participating in P.D.L. appears to have changed Mr. J both as a teacher and in the way he views his students and is

reflected in his ending comments: "I am not the same teacher that I used to be as far as understanding the kids [students], I used to see them as my enemies. At the beginning I thought of quitting, but now I'm thinking of continuing to educate these kids [students]. We are like partners, I'm not just the teacher that they have to listen to. I am trying to know them, their problems, what is causing behaviors... it is not as easy as I thought in the beginning."

NARRATIVE B

Ms. M has taught for five years, including two years as a kindergarten teacher. She was teaching a gifted kindergarten class and was the grade leader at her school when she applied to P.D.L. She learned about the program from several colleagues who had participated previously and had spoken very highly of the program. She was encouraged to apply to P.D.L. by a close friend, who is now a resident teacher, and her principal. Ms. M was also interested in becoming a resident teacher. Both her friend and the principal shared her interest, and felt she would be a good candidate for the position.

Ms. M recently completed her graduate studies, but has since resolved that the actual application of what she learned in school is the best training. She has visited other classrooms and has had others observe her classroom and give helpful feedback. Professionals from Teacher's College have also provided staff development in her school. Ms. M described her role as "teacher as midwife," helping children to pull information out of themselves and come to terms with how and what they want to learn. Her students enjoy having stories read to

them and engaging in a discussion afterwards. Ms. M actively encourages her children to become self-sufficient in resolving their problems with one other.

Ms. M indicated that she was currently using cooperative learning, small group lessons, whole language, hands-on process, and interdisciplinary approach to learning in her classroom. She rated herself as "very good" or "good" on all of the items in the self-rating performance instrument. Like Mr. J, she too did not indicate that she needed improvement in any of the areas listed.

Since Ms. M was interested in becoming a resident teacher and did not want to be out of her classroom for a long period of time, the P.D.L. site facilitator designed a mini-lab for her, during which she visited two resident teachers for one week each. One of the resident teachers made a pre-lab visit to Ms. M's classroom. Ms. M was very comfortable with the visit because the resident teacher treated her as a professional and not as someone she had come in to criticize. From her P.D.L. experience, Ms. M hoped to gain new ideas for her science and math programs, hints for daily planning, and techniques on being a resident.

An adjunct spent three days in Ms. M's classroom, during which she familiarized him with the daily routine and lessons that needed to be covered. He assisted Ms. M in planning for his coverage of the class and also accompanied the class on a field trip. It was decided that the adjunct would do a unit on "bugs" during Ms. M's absence, in preparation for the next field trip to Central Park. Both Ms. M and the children felt comfortable

having the adjunct in the classroom. "It was important to me to leave someone in the classroom with whom I felt comfortable. I had observed him working in other classrooms, and saw how great he was with the children. I requested him as the adjunct for my class... the children bonded with him from the beginning and they were quite comfortable."

Ms. M spent four days with each of two kindergarten teachers in two schools. She also observed a first grade class for one day in each school. "I teach gifted kindergarten, so I wanted to observe in a more academic setting." She described her resident teachers as having different styles. "The first teacher immediately put me to work. She was very focused. I felt like I was co-teaching with her." In the second teacher's classroom, Ms. M was more of an observer. Because the first teacher had helped her to solidify what she wanted to learn, Ms. M was able to move on to the next teacher with well-defined learning goals. Ms. M believed, however, that her visit with the second teacher would have been more effective if that teacher had made a pre-lab visit to her classroom. By doing so, the resident would have known what to expect of Ms. M and would have had a better foundation on which to base her comments.

During the lab, Ms. M decided to focus on integrating art into the curriculum in addition to her previously stated goals. Prior to P.D.L., Ms. M felt that she was not providing enough math and science experiences to her students but found it difficult to find the time to do more. However, she has now

incorporated a "center time" for math, science, and art into the five centers that are in use at one time in her classroom. By using centers, Ms. M is able to make time for math, science, art, and to integrate them into the classroom. In the centers, children are instructed to "do it, write about it, draw it, talk about it, and share it." Ms. M also visited the P.D.L resource room daily and plans to borrow books from it for the children's use as well as for her own reference.

"Participating in P.D.L. has made me a little more focused. It has allowed me to take a step back from my classroom so I could evaluate what's going on there." Ms. M returned to her class more aware of how much her students had progressed since the beginning of the year, and how well the routines she had established functioned in teaching the curriculum. Ms. M also values the fact that P.D.L. has broadened her professional network (the coordinator, both resident teachers, and a first grade teacher she observed). "There are more people I can go to now on a collegial level for comments and criticisms."

In preparation for becoming a resident teacher Ms. M commented, "I learned how to relate to a person who is visiting, not as a mentor teacher, but as a colleague with whom you can have both professional and personal discussions." Her experience made her aware of the time commitment involved in being a resident teacher, which sometimes means giving up lunch and prep periods. Nevertheless, she is still interested in being a resident teacher but wants to be sure that her class is

functioning well enough so that she feels comfortable leaving them to visit other schools.

The principal at Ms. M's school strongly supports P.D.L., and the teachers are also very enthusiastic about the program. This year, 1993-94, all of the second grade teachers are participating. Ms. M. has shared her experience with her colleagues during grade meetings, and has spoken about it with others.

NARRATIVE C

Ms. A has been teaching Special Instruction Environment (SIE) III classes for all eight years of her teaching career. She learned about P.D.L. at a staff meeting, at which the assistant principal made a presentation and distributed P.D.L. literature. Ms. A was the first teacher in her school to apply to and be accepted by P.D.L. As she stated, her reason for applying to the program was "to gain more information on how to teach academics and motivate my class; some of my students are not too motivated academically." She fully expected that by participating the program, she would be "refreshed mentally" and be able to update her skills and abilities as a teacher, as well as share her own classroom experiences.

Ms. A described her six students, who range in age from 4 1/2 to 12 years, as being on three different levels. One high functioning student reads, is expressive, and is knowledgeable about current events. The students in the middle group express themselves well by pointing to picture or objects. One student

is on a third level, and needs assistance to recognize and write the first letter in her name.

Ms. A was matched with a resident teacher of a SIE VI class, whose students were all verbal, on a higher cognitive level, and more academic than her own class. The resident teacher made a pre-lab visit to Ms. A's classroom and was impressed with her class structure, room arrangement, and materials. Ms. A commented that, "the resident was pleased to see how well the students responded nonverbally, and how well they followed the schedule." The two teachers decided that during Ms. A's visit she would observe her resident's population and determine how she could best incorporate some of the academic materials for her class. (Ms. A also planned to visit a class in another school for a day to get some new ideas as well.)

On a checklist of teaching strategies presented by the interviewer, Ms. A indicated that she used small group lessons, whole language, and curriculum guides in her teaching. To this, she added, total communication (use of pictures, a little signing, communication boards and wallets, and inclusion (wherein select students visit mainstream classes for one period twice a week). As in the previously discussed cases, Ms. A also rated her self as "very good" or "good" in all of the areas on the self-rating performance list.

An adjunct teacher spent one week with Mrs. A before her P.D.L. lab. Ms. A made her aware of the importance of being firm with the students and consistent in following the daily schedule.

She reviewed with the adjunct, the students' behaviors and their individual plans. The adjunct needed to know the procedures for their Friday trips, which included having students wear I.D. buttons, and bringing along emergency cards. Ms. A reminded the adjunct that it was important for her to meet the bus on time each morning and escort the children to the classroom. Ms. A was concerned that the adjunct was "too soft spoken" and she had some reservations about the adjunct's ability to manage the classroom independently. (Due to illness, it was not possible to interview Ms. A after her P.D.L. lab experience.)

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants in the 1993-94 Professional Development Laboratory were mostly female, with a master's degree, six or more years of teaching experience, and had common branches or special education certification.

This year, for the first time, paraprofessionals took part in the program as part of the structure of the newly implemented P.D.L. program in District 75.

P.D.L. resident teachers reported broadening their knowledge base, gaining skills as a coach/staff developer, and becoming more flexible and open to sharing and learning new tools of the trade. Eighty percent of the resident teachers expressed more satisfaction with their jobs as teachers since joining P.D.L.

The teachers who participated in the yearlong graduate course offered to resident teachers by P.D.L. in collaboration with N.Y.U., believed that the course helped them to expand their knowledge of evaluation techniques and to improve their ability to communicate and disseminate information to others. An enhanced awareness of evaluation techniques could prove quite helpful to resident teachers in assessing, along with their visiting teacher, how much has been accomplished during the lab and the amount of additional follow-up needed. For teachers needing improvement in particular skills, proper assessment at the end of the lab might indicate that they would need more than the usual follow-up time.

The majority of the visiting teachers listed improvement of classroom management skills as their primary reason for applying

to P.D.L. but, in fact reported that, they received numerous benefits from their lab stay with the resident teachers. Visiting teachers expanded their awareness of new materials and how to use them, gained the courage to reach out for help, and enhanced their self-confidence in the classroom. As a result of their P.D.L. experience, visiting teachers also made several changes upon returning to their own classrooms. Some of the changes included, rearranging classroom furniture to enhance group learning, integrating subject matter, developing their own teaching materials, and using centers and cooperative learning techniques.

Most of the adjuncts decided to apply to P.D.L. after hearing about the program from friends, teachers, site facilitators, or reading an ad in the "New York Times." Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of the adjunct teachers had prior teaching experience in either public or private schools.

Three-fourths of the adjunct teachers described their P.D.L. experiences as terrific because of the variation in their work assignments. (Adjuncts often work in several schools, with different teachers, in different classes.) Three-fourths of the adjunct teachers also stated that they would apply for the program again, and 50 percent of the teachers were offered full-time classroom teaching positions.

P.D.L. school principals were very supportive of the program in their responses. They were encouraged by the effective and productive changes they saw in both their resident and visiting teachers as a result of their participation in P.D.L.

In addition to reporting examples of the skills improvement and classroom changes made by individual visiting teachers, the three narratives also pointed out the flexibility inherent in the program. For example, in one case a mini-lab was devised for a teacher who could not be away from her students for an entire lab, and in another case, two periods of observation were combined with two periods of teaching which provided the opportunity for immediate feedback. To the extent possible, program staff will make an effort to structure a lab to fit the needs of the visiting teacher. One narrative in particular, also illustrated an important feature of P.D.L. Specifically, the act of reaching out to teachers in need and offering them constructive assistance, can often mean the difference between keeping or losing potentially good and committed teachers.

Given the financial climate that exists at this time, it is understood that budget funds are very limited. However, O.E.R. would like to encourage program staff to examine the merits of the suggestions for program improvement made by the participants as well as the recommendations that are set forth. Accordingly, based on the findings of this evaluation, O.E.R.'s recommendations are:

- Continue to expand the program to other districts so that more teachers can have the opportunity to participate.
- Encourage more resident teachers to enroll in the graduate course offered to them by P.D.L. in in collaboration with N.Y.U.
- Provide visiting teachers with follow-up on an as-needed basis. Some teachers may require more visits than others.

- Find some means of bringing participants together on a regular basis, either annually or in small groups throughout the year, to support group cohesiveness and networking, as well as provide a forum for evaluative feedback.